

# IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH SEMANTIC MAPPING TECHNIQUE IN GENRE-BASED APPROACH

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## Abstract

The aims of this study are (1) to find out the problems of the students in writing, and (2) to find the effective ways of teaching applying semantic mapping technique in genre-based approach to improve writing skill for the tenth graders in SMK Nasional Berbah, Sleman. The study belongs to classroom action research. The object of this research was class X TP of SMK Nasional Berbah, Sleman. The researcher used semantic mapping technique that was combined with genre-based approach to resolve the students' problem in writing. The researcher used qualitative analysis. The finding showed that (1) The problems in writing were (a) most of the students thought that writing was difficult task, (b) the students had difficulties to write a text, (c) the students still lacked of vocabulary, (d) the students had difficulties in developing ideas, (e) the students often made errors in grammatical rules when they wrote a text. (2) The effective ways of teaching applying semantic mapping technique in genre based approach consisted of four stages. (a) In BKOF, the researcher showed the picture about Parts of Motorcycle and drilled about specific words to the students. (b) in MOT, the researcher gave example of recount text and also some questions related to the topic. (c) in JCOT the researcher asked the students to make a list of main points and developed each point into some sentences. (d) in ICOT, the researcher asked the students to write a recount text individually based on their own ideas. The result of this study showed that semantic mapping technique could help the students to generate ideas, develop students' ability in writing, and increase the students' knowledge.

**Keywords:** *writing skills, Semantic mapping, genre-based approach*

## Introduction

Learning English is important for everyone to communicate, because English is the international language. English language is one of the subject matters learned by the students from Junior High School up to University level. It covers four language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Those skills have to be mastered by the students in order to achieve the goal of mastering English proficiency.

Writing is one of English language skills which is important to be taught because writing is one of ways to communicate with others. Writing can be the form of communication that allows students to put their feelings and ideas on a paper or the other media. Actually learning writing is not easy, because writing skill includes a complex and difficult things. Most of students think that writing is the difficult task. It makes students uninterested in learning writing. They often make grammatical mistakes and errors when they write a text. Students also still lack of vocabulary to express their ideas.

One of the students' problems in learning writing is that the students felt difficult in developing ideas. To face the students' problems in developing idea, there are some techniques which can be used to resolve the difficulties in developing ideas. One of the techniques is semantic mapping.

The use of semantic mapping technique was possibly implemented to develop idea in learning writing. There are many benefits from the use of semantic mapping technique. A Semantic mapping technique can be used as a technique in teaching and learning writing. The use of semantic mapping can help students identify the patterns of organization of a text. It can help the students to describe their ideas. It concludes that semantic mapping technique can be useful to help students to generate ideas in writing.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher conducted two problems' formulation. They are: (1) what are the problems of the students in writing? (2) what are the effective ways of teaching applying semantic mapping technique in genre based approach to improve writing skill for the tenth grade students of SMK Nasional Berbah?

## **Theoretical Review**

### ***Writing Skill***

Writing skill is a skill of how to put the ideas into written form. Chandler (1995) states that writing skills are specific abilities which help writers put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form that mentally interacts with the message. It implies that through writing, the writers or students can explore their experiences, adventures, feelings or ideas in written form for communication with their readers. In relation to these definitions, writing can be considered as a highly complex process, because it involves the processes of having ideas to express and having the knowledge to express them. Next, Raimes (1983:4) states that writing skill is a skill to communicate with a reader. Writing skill is also used to express the ideas in words, sentences and paragraphs without the pressure of the face-to-face communication. Thus, writing is a method of communication can be used to establish and maintain contact with others, transmit information, express thoughts, feeling and reactions.

### ***Semantic Mapping***

Harmer (2007:235) defines that semantic mapping or word map is an extremely engaging way of building up vocabulary knowledge as well as provoking students into retrieving and using what they know. It is a prewriting technique by drawing a diagram of words using lines, boxes, arrows, circles, words, and phrases to show how new words and ideas are related to the topic. Brown (2000:308-309) states that making such semantic maps can be done individually. The early drafts of these maps can be quite messy, which is perfectly acceptable. Here the figure of semantic mapping for example, shows a first attempt by a small group of students to draw a semantic map of an article by Rick Gore called "Between Fire and Ice: The Planets," an article about a total solar eclipse as seen through the eyes of villagers in Patuk, Java.

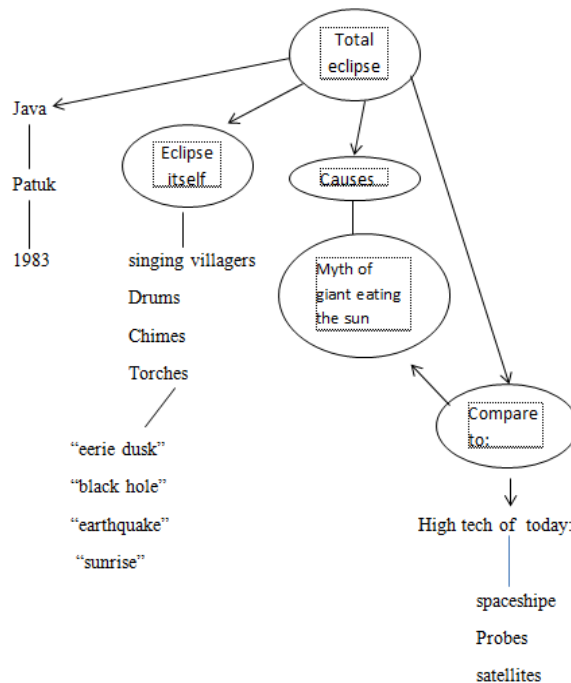


Figure 1. Semantic Mapping of “Between Fire and Ice: The Planets” Article

### ***Technique of Semantic Mapping***

Semantic mapping is one of technique which can be used before the students start writing. The Semantic mapping technique can help students in finding ideas before they begin to write a text. In this research, it concentrates on the use of semantic mapping technique in order to help students to produce writing more easily. The use of semantic mapping technique is possibly implemented in learning writing. Antonacci in Amoush (2012:715) mentions that semantic mapping is a visual representation of knowledge, a picture of conceptual relationship. It means that semantic mapping is believed as a useful technique to facilitate the students in comprehending texts properly. The semantic mapping technique has some benefits. The technique can be used for several instructional purposes. The use of the technique can help students to identify the patterns of organization of ideas and concepts. It can help students to describe their ideas. Then, a semantic mapping strategy can be useful for introducing important vocabulary. It shows students how the terms are interrelated.

## Genre Based Approach

Brown (2000) states that an approach is a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, teaching and learning. Meanwhile, Brown (2000) defines an approach as “assumptions, beliefs and theories about the nature of language and language learning”.

The Cycle of Teaching and Learning includes stages in which GBA is carried out. In the development of the GBA theory, the cycle of teaching and learning was introduced by Hammond et al in 1992 which includes; Building Knowledge of Field (BKoF), Modeling of Text (MoT), Joint Construction of Text (JCoT), and Independent Construction of Text (ICoT).

Table 1. The Steps of Teaching Writing Using Semantic Mapping in GBA

BKOF	<p>In BKoF stage, the teacher and the students do some activities with applying the Semantic Mapping Technique. The teacher give a task to generate ideas and vocabulary. The task is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Firstly, the teacher explains the social context using semantic mapping. For instance: the teacher gives a topic about clothes. There are t-shirt, jacket, and pants. The t-shirt have some colours such as red, black, white, blue, yellow and many more.</li><li>Secondly, the teacher link the students' knowledge. In this activity, the teacher gives a stimulation before the students write their own ideas in the learning process.</li></ol>
MOT	<p>After completing the BKoF stage, the teacher does the step of Modelling of Text (MoT) which is the second stage in GBA. In this stage, the teacher and students discusses a text. In this stage, the teacher explains the function and the generic structure of a text. The activities and tasks in this stage as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>The teacher asks the students to read the text that given by the teacher.</li><li>The teacher asks the students to identify the generic structure, and language features of a text.</li><li>The teacher gives some questions related to the topic.</li></ol>
JCOT	<p>In this stage, teacher and students work together. The teacher acts such as a guide that guides the students until they can write a text by themselves. The students attempt to develop texts of the target genre by following the instructions from teacher. The main purpose is to make students show their writing ability and show their confidence to write. The activities and the tasks during this stage are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>The class have discussion the purpose of the text, and the generic structure of text.</li><li>Building and developing the field through activities such as</li></ol>

	<p>information gathering, questioning, answering the questions related the topic.</p> <p>c. Giving a topic to the students.</p> <p>d. The teaching and learning activity applying the semantic mapping technique. The steps are:</p> <p>a) The class discusses the target topic with the students.</p> <p>b) The teacher asks the students to brainstorm words related to the topic. This activity is named “listing of data”</p> <p>c) She/he asks the students to write the word list by categories in the form of a mapping, then, she asks the students to write sentence using some words on the semantic mapping.</p> <p>d) The teacher asks the students to write a text based on the topic.</p>
ICOT	<p>ICoT is the final stage. In this stage, the students are expected to produce their own texts independently. The teacher gives the students great opportunity to write a text based on the text type and the social functions of the text, while the teacher observes and gives advice from the sidelines.</p>

## Methodology

This research is an action research. Burns (2010:1) says that “action research is part of a broad movement that has been going on in education generally for some time”. It was related to the ideas of reflective practice and the researcher as a teacher. Action research involves taking a self reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring the research in the teaching context.

The researcher used the designs of Kemmis and MC Taggart (2000:595) to describe it as participatory research. It is stated that action research involves a spiral of self-reflective spirals of:

1. Planning a change,
2. Acting and observing the process and consequences of the change,
3. Reflecting on these processes and consequences and then re planning.
4. Acting and observing
5. Reflecting etc.

The action research spiral

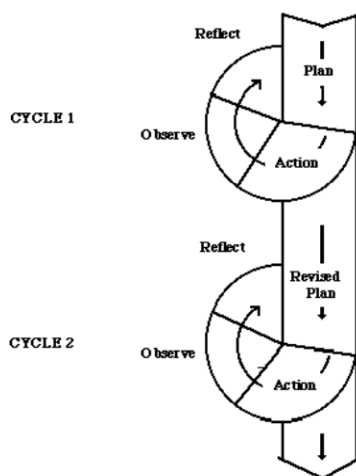


Figure 2: Action Research Cycle (Taggart, 2000)

## Findings

In this study, the researcher tried to discuss the two objectives based on the research questions. (1) The researcher identified the students' problems in writing: a) most of the students thought that writing was difficult task, (b) the students had difficulties to write a text, (c) the students still lacked of vocabulary, (d) the students had difficulties in developing ideas, (e) the students often made errors in grammatical rules when they wrote a text. (2) The researcher described the improvements of students' writing after using semantic mapping technique that was combined with genre based approach. The finding was started by identifying the problems in the classroom along the teaching and learning process.

## Implementation of the Actions

### Cycle 1

The teaching and learning process in Cycle 1 was conducted in three meetings. In this cycle, the researcher tried to overcome the writing problem focused on motivation and generating ideas in students' writing skills by applying semantic mapping in genre based approach.

#### 1.) Planning

Planning was the first step in this action research arranged by the researcher. The researcher arranged the planning to improve students' writing competence in the class.

In this stage, the researcher planned to improve students' writing skills related to the elements of writing. The researcher divided the actions in three meetings.

## 2.) Acting and Observing 1

The teaching and learning process in Cycle 1 was conducted in three meetings. In each meeting the researcher used the four-stages technique (BKOF, MOT, JCOT, & ICOT) to teach the recount text in class X TP (Mechanical Engineering) of SMK Nasional Berbah. The detail of the action in each meeting was discussed as follows.

### a) First Meeting

The first meeting was conducted on May, 8, 2019. It was done in class X TP from 10.00 a.m. until 11.30 a.m. In this Meeting, the researcher acted as a teacher. In the first meeting, the researcher focused on the activity was about vocabularies that related with the topic. She started the lesson with Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF). Next, she continued the lesson with Modelling of Text (MOT). The researcher explained about recount text in general, such the generic structure, the social function, and the language features. Then, she explained the grammatical pattern used in Recount Text. After that, she gave a model of a text. Finally, the researcher asked students to read the text.

### b) Second Meeting

The second meeting was conducted on May, 9, 2019. It started from 10.00 a.m. until 11.30 a.m. The researcher started the lesson with Modelling of Text (MOT) to review the previous lesson. After that, she prepared the next activities. The next lesson was dealing with Joint Construction of Text (JCOT). In JCOT, there were four stages. The first stage was Planning, the second stage was Drafting, the third stage third was Editing, and the last stage was the final product.

### c) Third Meeting

The third meeting was conducted on May, 15, 2019. It began from 10.00 a.m. until 11.30 a.m. The researcher started the lesson with Independent Construction of Text (ICOT). In this lesson, the she asked the students to write a recount text individually.



### 3.) Reflection

The reflection which is needed to evaluate the actions implemented in Cycle 1 was based on the observations during the teaching and learning process. From that observation, the researcher still got some problems related with the result of cycle 1, they are:

1. The students still felt difficult when they develop the ideas into a paragraph.
2. The students still could not generate their ideas when they create a recount text using *Past Tense*. Sometimes, the students could not identify the differences between to be in past tense (was/were) and in present tense (is/am/are). They were still confused in determining the pattern of past tense and verb.
3. Some students still lack of vocabulary. They still used dictionary to create the sentences in the class. Moreover, when the researcher gave them instruction to create a recount text, they did it in a long time because they think too much when they selected the appropriate words.

### Cycle 2

#### 1.) Revised Planning

In this cycle, the researcher conducted the cycle in two meetings. The lesson plans were developed by the researcher in order to make the teaching and learning process of writing in Cycle 2 run well. Based on the problems in the cycle 1, she planned the next materials that is suitable to teach in the next meeting (cycle 2). She had revised the planning to fix the problem in the cycle 1.

#### 2.) Acting and Observing 2

The teaching and learning process in Cycle 2 was conducted in two meetings contained BKOF, MOT, JCOT, & ICOT stages. The teaching and learning process in cycle 2 was same with cycle 1. Although in cycle 2, the process learning more focus to overcome the problem of students' writing that found in cycle 1. The detail of the action in each meeting was discussed as follows.

- a.) The first meeting was held on June, 11, 2019. The researcher started the lesson with Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF).

In BKOF stage, the researcher gave the students some situations before she gave students instruction to create a text. The topic of the text would be same with previous lesson "*Practice in Motorcycle Service*". So they could generate and develop their ideas. Next, the researcher drilled the students' specific vocabulary (Part of Motorcycle). The drilling process would be given repeatedly. After drilling process, the researcher explained again about "Past Tense".

The next stage was MOT. In this stage, the teacher gave and explained the recount text to the students. After that, the researcher gave some questions to the students. The questions were related to the topic.

The last stage was JCOT. In JCOT stage, the researcher asked the students to make a list of main point before they write a recount text. The researcher guided the students to create ideas through semantic mapping. After that, she asked the students to develop those main point into some sentences. Then, the researcher asked students to write a recount text based on their list of main point that created before. In the end of the class, the researcher concluded the lesson.

- b.) The second meeting was held on June, 18, 2019. In the second meeting, there was ICOT stage. Independent Construction of Text (ICOT) was the last step in teaching and learning process. In the beginning of the class, the researcher did some activities in Pre-Teaching as usual. Then, the researcher discussed the previous lesson with the students. After that, she asked the students to write a recount text based on their ideas individually.

### 3.) Reflection cycle 2

The implementation of semantic mapping technique in genre based approach in teaching writing skills improved the students' writing ability. The improvement of writing skills is shown by the students' response during the teaching and learning processes. Semantic Mapping Technique which was practiced and drilling using specific vocabulary (Part of

Motorcycle) enable to develop students' writing skill. The students could create a recount text using past tense pattern.

The improvement is also shown by the students' writing improvement in the class when they did the exercises. They could generate ideas, and they also could develop the ideas into some sentences. The improvement is also shown by the students' score of post-test. And then, the researcher compared the score between cycle 1 and cycle 2 (see the appendix). The students' scores from cycle 1 and cycle 2 improved. It means that the researcher was successful in applying the technique in teaching and learning process.

## **Discussion**

The researcher conducted two cycles in teaching and learning writing. Each cycle have been done in two meetings. Those activities consisted of four stages of teaching writing through Semantic Mapping Technique which was combined with Genre Based Approach (GBA). They are BKOF, MOT, JCOT, and ICOT.

The use of semantic mapping technique in genre based approach could increase the students' writing skill. It could be seen from the students' participation in the class. The students paid attention to the teacher and they were interested to follow teaching and learning activity. The process of Semantic Mapping in GBA could make the students improve their ability in writing skill.. Moreover, they were more interested to learn English. The students could generate the ideas and developing those ideas into some sentences. They also trained themselves to write briefly. In addition, the students could learn how to write a recount text by using specific topic. It could be seen in their activities along the teaching and learning process. The semantic mapping technique was strong enough to help students solve their difficulties in writing skill through generatingn ideas into sentences..

## **Conclusion**

1. The problems in writing skill at SMK Nasional Berbah, Sleman.
  - a. Most of students think that writing was the difficult task.
  - b. The students felt difficult to write a text.
  - c. The students often make errors in grammatical when they wrote a text.
  - d. The students still lacked of vocabulary to describe their ideas.

- e. The students felt difficult to develop their ideas in the text.
2. There effective ways of teaching applying semantic mapping technique to improve writing skill for the tenth grade students of SMK Nasional Berbah, Sleman were as follow
- a. BKOF (Building Knowledge of Field)
- 1.) The teacher showed the picture about "Part of Motorcycle".
  - 2.) The class discussed about the specific words from the topic "Part of motorcycle"
  - 3.) She/he drilled the students about specific words "Part of Motorcycle). In moment, she asked the students to repeat the her speak.
  - 4.) The teacher explained again the pattern of "Past Tense". Then, she gave the students some sentences as the examples. The teacher also gave the students exercises to write some sentences using "Past Tense" pattern.
  - 5.) The class discussed the "Regular and Irregular Verb" then she also gave some exercises to the students .
- b. MOT (Modelling of Text)
- The teacher gave and explained the recount text to the students. After that, she gave some questions to the students. That questions were related to the topic.
- c. JCOT (Joint Construction of Text)
- 1.) The teacher asked the students to make a list of main points before they wrote recount text.
  - 2.) She/he guided the students to create ideas through semantic mapping technique. In moment, the teacher asked the students to develop those main points into some sentences.
  - 3.) She/he asked the students to write a recount text based on their ideas.
- d. ICOT (Independent Construction of Text)
- The teacher asked the students to write a recount text individually based on their ideas. At the time, she did not guide the students.

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